AN ACCOUNT

OF THE GREAT

NEW ENGLAND

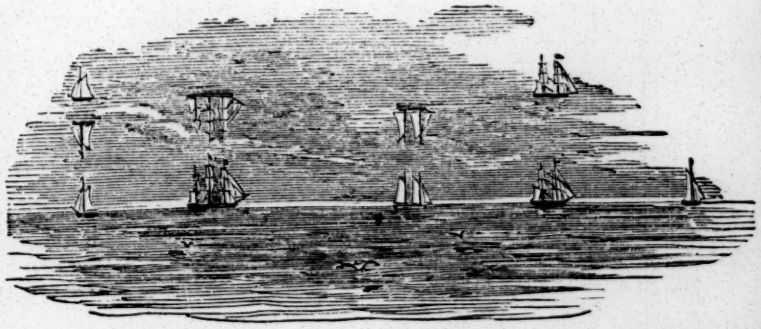
WITCHCRAFT:

WITH AN ATTEMPT TO EXHIBIT THE PHILOSOPHY OF

SPECTRE SEEING, CHARMING, ETC.

EMBRACED IN A

LECTURE ON THE OCCULT SCIENCES.



Phantom Ships, as seen from Nahant, on a summer day, in 1843. See page 23.

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LECTURE

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EMBRACING SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

NEW ENGLAND WITCHCRAFT,

WITH AN ATTEMPT TO EXHIBIT THE PHILOSOPHY OF

SPECTRE SEEING, DISEASE CHARMING, &c.

BY JAMES R. NEWHALL.

[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF AUDITORS.]

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PART I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

STRICTLY speaking, perhaps nothing is a science which is not demonstrable. Yet it would savor too strongly of hypercriticism to reject the generic term "Occult Sciences," in reference to the systems of Astrology, Conjuration, Demonology, Divination, Enchantment, Fascination, Magic, Necromancy, Sorcery, Witchcraft, &c. At all events, we have the highest sanction for the usage.

The following pages, which embrace the substance of a lecture delivered before several lyceum institutions, contain as full an examination of those in all ages more or less prevalent systems, as practicable. But Witchcraft is the subject chiefly dwelt upon, that seeming of rather the most tangible nature, and most interesting in its developments and history.*

No subject, probably, has been more diversely estimated by different minds, or more generally passed over without such examination as might lead to a just conclusion as to its nature and merits, than that popularly known as *Witchcraft*. Yet, at least that strange and startling episode in the history of New England, known as the Salem Witchcraft—the witchcraft of 1692—is worthy of something more than a sneer. We are accustomed to look back upon that terrific outbreak as a wild, a fearful dream of the past—sad in its effects, but

* Rev. Mr. Upham, of Salem, a few years since published a volume upon Witchcraft. It contains much valuable matter, presented in an interesting form. And there would certainly be no apology for the publication of a portion of the present work, were it not that the writer has ventured to take a somewhat different view of the merits of the subject, from that taken by the learned and experienced author referred to. This, however, he has done with the most unfeigned diffidence.

a genuine delusion—the legitimate offspring of no recognised principle of human action—an occurrence, justly exciting in one, pity; in another, contempt; in another, mirth; in all, astonishment; but in none, serious consideration.

It is not conclusive evidence of perfect wisdom in the fancied seekers after truth, to be continually tossed upon a sea of doubt. This, however, is in general the only evidence we have of their wisdom. A well-ordered shaking of the head has with many proved very productive philosophical capital. But there are strange peculiarities in the honest reasoning and observation of men. Illimitable is the number of those who appear to think there is no truth, save such as can be recognised by one at least of the external senses. Others seem to have little or no affection for truth, unless they find her sporting in a mantle of mystery. "Unlimited skepticism," says Dugald Stuart, "is as much the child of imbecility as implicit credulity."

Every observing mind, too, has been astonished to perceive what diversity there is among people, as to the weight they attach to evidence of the different kinds, or to that connected with any given subject.* And it is a curious fact that some begin to doubt at the very point where others begin to believe. This is clearly exemplified both among the learned and the ignorant. We may refer to the celebrated Dr. Johnson, in illustration. He was remarkable for his disbelief in all relations of uncommon occurrences in the natural world, and quite as remarkable for his firm belief in wonders of the spiritual world. It was really dangerous for any one to attempt to give him an account of an extraordinary tempest, a hurricane, or conflagration, if he had his cane at hand. The narrator was fortunate if he escaped with no severer visitation than the characteristic vociferation—You lie sir! hold your tongue sir! Yet if one went to him with the whimsical details of some ghost-hunting expedition, or of the fulfilment of some wonderful dream, he was sure of a patient hearing. It is said that he

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*This is one circumstance which not unfrequently occasions great perplexity in courts of justice. Some people can feel no force in evidence which is perfectly convincing to others. And it is curious to observe how often witnesses, all testifying to the same facts, which came under the immediate observation of each, and all conscientiously aiming to disclose the truth, seemingly all but directly contradict each other. The inexperienced jurors smile, but the judges and attorneys take it gravely as a matter of course. These disagreements in testimony may arise from the different lights in which people view things, from the different impressions made upon the mind, and from the fact that one mind may fix upon a point as the most important, which to another is so frivolous as to be entirely overlooked. What to one may at the time have appeared the whole gist of the matter to another may have seemed a mere incident. And the whole web of testimony is woven accordingly.

and John Wesley once came near having a serious quarrel, because the latter did not pursue, with sufficient zeal to suit the Doctor, a ghost, represented to have appeared in some part of London.

The credulity of others—of a vast majority; perhaps—runs in a channel directly the reverse. They will believe utter absurdities—impossibilities—when they relate to the physical world. But of transactions beyond the possibility of recognition by the senses, they have no conception, will believe nothing.

Prejudice, or professional dignity, or a deep rooted affection for the good old ways of our fathers, it is to be apprehended, too often prevents a successful search after truth, among those otherwise most competent for the labor. Sir Astley Cooper refused to be present at some novel though highly important experiments undertaken by a professional brother, because he had a character to lose! The professor of philosophy at Padua, refused to look through Galileo's telescope for the purpose of convincing himself that Jupiter had satellites; and together with an equally wise philosophical brother of Pisa, made speeches to prove that Jupiter could boast of no such ornaments; but, as Galileo sagely intimates, it proved impossible for them to argue the luminaries out of heaven. Cecil spoke of Lord Bacon as a man of mere speculation; and of his philosophical discoveries as new and amusing, but fanciful and absurd! But examples are not required, to show that the schoolmen are sufficiently inclined to pursue the beaten track, without risking reputation in the endeavor to discover and exhibit new truths.

Most people prefer laboring with their hands rather than their heads. They are more ready to act than think—unless they are too indolent to do either. And hence, when a subject, no matter how deep or complicated, is presented, they at once give a jump at a conclusion as to its nature or merits; and just where they happen to alight, there they forever remain; there they plant their sympathies and mould their principles. Some of their neighbors, perhaps, land far enough from them, and each, of course, looks upon the other as lamentably blinded by the mire into which he has fallen. From this very aversion to mental exercise, many and gross errors are entertained by the great mass of mankind.

And again: The modes of thinking are about as much guided by fashion as the modes of dress. One community will hold, as with a death-grasp, principles which would shock another community; and one age will cherish and nurse, with the tenderest solicitude, senti-

ments which would excite nothing but contempt and ridicule in another age. The old proverb that it is as well to be out of the world as out of the fashion, bears sway in mental action, to as great an extent as elsewhere. Most people have the utmost horror of appearing singular, in their conduct or opinions, and hence carefully avoid straying from the path which others have trodden. And some again are so timid, that they would forever let their sails lie loose, rather than run into a strange country.

Our sympathies, too, have more to do with moulding our views, than we are generally aware of. The judgment is frequently led captive by the sympathies. Curious experiments have been tried on this point. By a skilful hand, whole communities, whole nations, have been thoroughly imbued with the most absurd notions, the most revolting principles. This is the great high road on which quackery, and creatures far more to be dreaded, travel in safety. And the sympathies operate as a contagious medium, through which people catch opinions as readily as they catch the measles; and oftentimes with just about as much benefit to themselves and those around them. The story of the nun will be remembered. Though she was not probably attempting any philosophical experiment, the case affords just as apt an illustration. From some strange impulse, she began one day, to mew, like a cat. And the next day, and the next, from the same impulse, she repeated her feline exercise. At length, one or two of her recluse sisters imitated her. The contagion spread through the community, and the interesting performance was no more neglected than was the duty of saying prayers. Not one could give any more satisfactory reason for the habit, than that the others did so. The grave old abbess herself finally joined them. And the ludicrous exhibitions did not close, till a most severe penalty was attached to every such breach of decorum, by the authorities. The counteraction induced, soon opened their eyes to the perfect absurdity of the habit, and for a time it was about as hard to restrain their laughter at the delusive spell from which they had become released, as it was to break the spell itself. But there was a kind of reality in all this; a reality similar to that in witchcraft. "The mass of mankind," as Dr. Paley observes, "act more from habit than reflection."

Truth itself is immutable. And fashion, sympathy, prejudice, nor age, can change its nature.

PART II.

Various Phases of Witchcraft. Sketches of its History. A Glance at the Grounds on which its Claims to Belief rest. Details of the Remarkable Outbreak in New England, in 1692. *Spectral Appearances, &c. &c.*

When I consider whether there are such persons as WITCHES, my mind is divided: I believe in general that there is such a thing as WITCHCRAFT, but can give no credit to any particular instance of it.—*Addison.*

IT is less than two centuries since all Christendom believed in witchcraft, demonology, and all similar systems. Now, almost all Christendom laughs at such things. In this, there is no proof for or against their truth. Are our school boys wiser than the philosophers of old? Are there greater minds, or more learned, pious, and reflecting men, than formerly? Certainly not. And none need be told that some of the greatest mental lights that ever shed lustre upon science or religion, also aimed to make luminous those abstruse systems.

The progress of fashion is as clearly exemplified, probably, in general interpretations of scripture, as in any thing that could be instanced. That the views of this age are correct, we, of course, believe; but a coming age may deem them absurd; just as we deem absurd the interpretations of past time. We all believe Martin Luther was a great man, and a man sincerely zealous in the cause of his Master; and our souls are nourished by the strong meat which his able hand prepared. But how much is our respect for him increased, when he gravely tells us of the Devil's coming into his bed room, and cracking stolen hazel nuts against his bed post, and otherwise disturbing his rest? Yet the Bible, in his view, created or sanctioned such belief. And in the variations of the views of mankind in relation to certain scriptural truths, the history of witchcraft is in a great degree

involved. When the belief in witchcraft prevailed, the received, the only, interpretations of scripture, required such belief. The converse is our case. It has, indeed, been said that witchcraft was entirely unknown till after Christianity began; that is, witchcraft as the term is now understood, for we are not unmindful that witches are spoken of in the Old Testament.* The reason given is that such a being as

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* The remarkable, and to modern theorists perplexing, story of the Witch of Endor, found in the 28th chapter of 1st Samuel, is, or ought to be, familiar to every one. The story is a short and simple one. "Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah." Saul was ruler in the land. "And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land." The Philistine hosts had assembled against him, and when he saw them "he was afraid and his heart greatly trembled." He then resorted to three supernatural methods for gaining instruction from the Lord, as to how he should proceed; he inquired of the Lord by dreams, by Urim, and by prophets. But the Lord answered him not. "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land: wherefore layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said unto Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" Now here is an account which cannot be trifled with. And to three points I would particularly ask attention. 1. Samuel actually did appear. To deny this would be directly to deny the Bible. 2. Both Saul and the witch herself had faith in her power to raise up the seer. "Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel." This certainly indicates full confidence in her power. 3. He came up immediately on her incantations. Not one of the best commentators, I believe, has ventured to express a doubt that Samuel actually appeared; but they, or some of them, have fixed upon the idea that the woman did not expect to call him up, and was surprised and alarmed when he arose. But it would be quite as accordant with the account to suppose that her alarm was occasioned by the discovery that she was in the awful presence of Saul, he who had visited with terrible vengeance all who practised such arts as those in which she was at that moment engaged. This conclusion seems to follow in the direct order of the incidents. Able commentators have supposed that the appearance of Samuel was entirely independent of the witch's arts; that her incantations had altogether failed, she not having succeeded in making one of her familiars assume the shape of Samuel; that the *real* appearance of the prophet was a true miracle wrought by almighty power. But here are the facts: Samuel did appear on her incantations, as was expected by her and Saul. And at the same time that Samuel arose she also seems to have discovered that she was in Saul's presence; and from this discovery her alarm appears to have arisen. There was miraculous power exercised. Was it exercised through her agency? I have here spoken of the scriptural statements without reference to modern definitions of witchcraft. Commentators too often make sad havoc with the sacred text. Their disquisitions are not always the most profitable kind of reading; particularly when they give loose to sectarian bias, or when they propose to support some favorite theory.

that called by christians the devil, was unknown to the heathen systems. And a witch is defined to be one who has deliberately entered into a compact with the devil; to have actually signed a writing, giving up his or her soul, after death, to the prince of darkness, on condition that his majesty will bestow certain supernatural powers, to be exercised till death.

In the Commentaries of Sir William Blackstone, a work from which men, ages hence, will continue to draw wisdom, is this passage: "To deny the possibility, nay the actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God."

The intellectual and pious Addison, as may have been observed by the little quotation from the Tattler, placed at the beginning of this division of my remarks, says, "I believe in general that there is such a thing as witchcraft."

The eminent Baxter denounced as "obdurate sadducees" the disbelievers in witchcraft. We might also refer to Sir Matthew Hale, to the good William Penn, to Bacon, and to hosts of others of the great and good, who have been equally clear in expressing their belief in the existence of witchcraft.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."—*Exodus* xxii: 18. Adam Clarke remarks on this passage: "Had there been no witches, such a law as this had never been made. The existence of the law, given under the direction of the Spirit of God, proves the existence of the thing. . . . . That witches, wizards, those who dealt with familiar spirits, &c., are represented in the sacred writings, as actually possessing a power to evoke the dead, to perform supernatural operations, and to discover hidden or secret things, by spells, charms, incantations, &c., is evident to every unprejudiced reader of the Bible." But we need not individualize; the whole christian world held it as a part of their system.

One of the strongest evidences of the existence of man's spiritual nature, separate from his physical—of his immortality—is his uncontrollable flights beyond the visible world, his seekings after something within the veil. The faith of some ages has been bright and beautiful; of others, wild and romantic; of others, gloomy and austere. And theology, literature, every thing, has been tinged by that faith. Poetry has received some of her loveliest ornaments, from the glowing systems of ages past, and even now the susceptible heart lingers fondly around the fading light. How beautifully has Coleridge referred to this:

"O never rudely will I blame his faith
In the might of stars and angels.
The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty and the majesty,
That had her haunts in dell or piny mountain,
Or forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and wat'ry depths; all these have vanished;
They live no longer in the faith of reason.
But still the heart doth need a language; still
Doth the old instinct bring back the old names,
And to yon starry world they now are gone,
Spirits or gods who used to share this earth
With man as with a friend; and to the lover,
Yonder they move; from yonder visible sky
Shoot influence down; and, even at this day,
'T is Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
And Venus who brings every thing that's fair."

The great witchcraft excitement at Salem, and indeed throughout New England, in 1692, though in some respects the most remarkable, was by no means the most frightful outbreak that ever occurred. Perhaps the most dreadful exhibitions took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1515, in three months, five hundred witches were burned at Geneva. A single judge, in one province of France, in the course of fifteen years, towards the close of the sixteenth century, condemned to the stake not less than nine hundred. In different parts of Europe, from the time christianity began, down to near the close of the last century, there were occasional outbreaks, more or less fearful.

We remarked, a paragraph or two back, that a witch, properly, was one who was supposed to have entered into a solemn compact, reduced to writing, with the devil. This, of course, supposes the at least occasional corporeal appearance of his satanic majesty. It is common, at this day, to refer the term devil to the abstract spirit of evil; so the corner stone is removed. But in all places where and all times when witchcraft has prevailed, the universal belief has been that the devil was as real a being as existed; and that he had legions of imps ever ready to do his bidding. The value received by the witches, in consideration of the surrender of their souls at death, in part consisted in the power to command the aid of invisible spirits, to harrass and torment those whom their malice, revenge or fancy should point out as victims, by pinching, strangling, biting, scratching, scalding, &c. The witches themselves were to have power to appear in the shape of beasts or spectres, or almost any form; also power to

inflict diseases upon their victims, and to cause them to pine away and die.

There is a possibility that the knowledge of the art of printing would have died with the inventor, had it not been for the popular belief in devil dealing. When the inventor appeared in the market place of Mentz, with a sample of his printed sheets, the people crowded around, and were very much astonished at their perfection. But their astonishment was redoubled on finding that they were precisely alike. If there was a wrong or defective letter in one, the same was the case with the whole; if there was a graceful flourish in one, none were without it. They besought him to inform them by what extraordinary process he had been able to produce such results. He made a secret of the discovery, designing to turn it to great future account. A panic soon seized upon the people. Terror mingled with their astonishment. They believed the inventor to have accepted an agency for the devil. He was seized and thrown into prison. And finally, to obtain release, he was forced to make known his secret.

Some learned writers have been at great pains to fix upon a *cause* for the extraordinary outbreak known the world over as the Salem Witchcraft. But of the result of these learned labors, people naturally entertain different views. The peculiarly trying situation of the colonists, at the period immediately preceding, has been forced prominently into view, as having prepared the public mind for such an excitement. That certainly was, in almost any point of view, an exceedingly dark period. The broad land was still almost entirely overshadowed by the primeval forest. The Indians had been making a most desperate effort for the extermination of the pale-skinned intruders upon their soil. To the ruthless Indian warfare, had been added the skill of the French.* The political affairs of the settlers, too, had for a time worn a most gloomy aspect.†

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* The dreadful conflict with the Indians, known as Philip's War, commenced in 1675. The red men fought with a desperation which could only have been felt by an expiring nation. The darkness of the winter's night was broken by the glare of the blazing habitation; and the path to many a settlement was traced by the blood upon the snows. The colonies never before sustained such a shock from their jealous and infuriated neighbors. Six hundred of the bravest of the colonial soldiery were lost in this war; a number of towns were made desolate; and six hundred dwellings destroyed. But it proved one of the last endeavors of the Indians. From the disasters of the swamp fight they never recovered; though spasmodic efforts were occasionally made, for years. But in 1690, the colonists were called to the field to face new, and in some respects, far more powerful enemies. The war with the French and Indians had broken out, and to the savage practices of the latter, were added the experienced generalship, the more deadly weapon, the national hatred, of the former.

† It was in 1684 that the colonial charter was annulled. And two years after, the cunning, arbitrary, and overbearing Sir Edmund Andros arrived with his royal commission. And ne

But the idea that these had any thing to do with the *cause* of the eruption, does not seem very satisfactory, when we consider that in other portions of the world, where they did not exist, similar transactions took place. And they would indeed seem rather to have a tendency to divert the mind from things pertaining to the unseen world. Might we not rather conclude that the cause was involved in facts like these: The whole civilized world at that time believed in witchcraft. There were no more raising their voices against it than there are raising their voices against christianity itself at the present day. The received interpretations of scripture required such belief. The laws of England and of all other christianized countries recognized it as a crime.* And then, what is very important, let us bear in mind that the colonists were singularly pertinacious in fancying that they were specially sent here by divine providence for the purpose of preserving pure those gospel doctrines which they and their brethren of the old world had sacrificed so much to sustain. Their minds were well prepared for the dark and fearful apprehension that the devil, while

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reader of New England history will need to be informed of the public ferment which his gross acts of oppression occasioned. He seemed to aim solely to aggrandize himself and his followers. Oppressive taxes were imposed; new offices with exorbitant fees were instituted; a remoulding or renewal of real-estate titles was required, and heavy charges for all property transactions levied. In short, next to enriching himself and his friends, his object seemed to be to vex and harrass those whom he governed. If the people of New England ever rejoiced, it was on the accession of William and Mary.

*Says Judge Blackstone: . . . . The thing itself [witchcraft] is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws; which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits. The civil law punishes with death not only the sorcerers themselves, but also those who consult them; imitating in the former the express law of God, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' And our own laws, both before and since the conquest, have been equally penal; ranking this crime in the same class with heresy, and condemning both to the flames." A statute of 33 Henry VIII. made all witchcraft and sorcery, felony, without benefit of clergy. And a statute of 1 James I. enacted "that all persons invoking any evil spirit, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit; or taking up dead bodies from their graves to be used in any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; or killing or otherwise hurting any person by such infernal arts, should be guilty of felony without benefit of clergy, and suffer death. And if any person should attempt by sorcery to discover hidden treasure, or to restore stolen goods, or to provoke unlawful love, or to hurt any man or beast, though the same were not effected, he should suffer imprisonment and pillory for the first offence, and death for the second.' The peculiar interest, which James individually exhibited, however, in these matters, did not meet with the reception, in after years, which he probably expected. His book-making propensity added but little lustre to his regal fame; though that fame was none the brightest. It was a cutting remark of the commentator, that "such a sceptre was too weighty to be wielded by such a hand." James however, had the wisdom and grace to recant some of his vagaries, before his death. Witchcraft had its legal ups and downs in England, till by statute of 9 George II. it was enacted "that no prosecution shall for the future be carried on against any persons for conjuration, witchcraft, sorcery, or enchantment." But still, persons pretending to be witches, fortune-tellers, &c., would, as with us, be guilty of misdemeanor, and fall under the provisions of vagrant acts.

wandering up and down the earth, seeking where he could do most mischief, had discovered this sequestered niche, which contained all that was pure, all that was lovely in the system established by him to whom of old he had offered all the kingdoms of the world for the boon of worship. And could they doubt that on making the discovery he had summoned his strongest powers for the destruction of the holy vine which they under the keenest privations had planted, and, at every earthly hazard, had cherished.

The remarkable excitement at Salem, commenced early in the year 1692. In the latter part of February, two little girls in the family of Rev. Mr. Parris, one his own daughter, named Elizabeth, about nine years, and the other, his neice, named Abigail Williams, twelve years of age, together with a girl in the neighborhood, named Ann Putnam, began to act in a most strange and unaccountable manner.* They did not, however, at first, appear to be maliciously or viciously inclined. They would jabber in strange language wild and unmeaning speeches. They would distort their countenances into the most odd and grotesque expressions, even on the most solemn occasions, and put their bodies into all manner of uncommon and unseemly postures. They would roll upon the floor, creep under chairs and tables, and crawl

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*These occurrences took place at Salem Village as it was then called, but now known as North Danvers. The church was established here in 1671, as a branch of the first church of Salem. Rev. Mr. Braman was the late pastor. Mr. Parris, in whose family the excitement commenced, was the fourth pastor. He was born at London, in 1653, and settled here, in 1689. The second pastor was Rev. George Burroughs; and it is painful to remark that he was executed for witchcraft, on Gallows Hill, August 19, 1692, under peculiarly affecting circumstances. Mr. Parris was a man of learning and fervent piety, but, in common with the Puritan clergy in general, he took a most dark and melancholy view of human nature. He appeared to perceive nothing bright or beautiful in the outward world, and nothing but corruption in the human heart. In looking over the parish records, some years since, I was induced to transcribe the following, which stands in Mr. Parris's own hand writing. And while copying, it was impossible to avoid a thought of the agony which filled the heart of him who made the record.

"27 March, Sab., 1692, Sacrament Day.

"After the common auditory was dismissed, and before the church communion at the Lord's table, the following testimony against the error of our sister Mary Sibley, who had given direction to my Indian man in an unwarrantable way, to find out witches, was read by the pastor. It is altogether undenyable that our great and blessed God hath suffered many persons, in several families, of this little village, to be greviously vexed and tortured in body, and to be deeply tempted, to the endangering of the destruction of their souls, and all these amazing facts (well known to many of us) to be done by witchcraft and diabolical operations. It is also well known that when these calamities first began, which was in my own family, the affliction was several weeks before such hellish operations as witchcraft was suspected. Nay it never brake forth to any considerable light until diabolical means were used by the making of a cake by my Indian man, who had his directions from this our Sister Mary Sibley, since which apparitions have been plenty, and exceeding much mischief hath followed. But by this means it seems the devil hath been raised amongst us, and his rage is vehement and terrible, and when he shall be silenced the Lord only knows."

into holes. They would seize the firebrands and scatter them around the rooms, besmear themselves with ashes, and as a quaint writer of that time says, make as if they would go up chimney. Such conduct, of course, excited the most painful apprehensions of their parents and friends; particularly as persuasion, threats, nor reprimands could overcome it. Considerable time was spent, in using every effort which the tenderest and most anxious solicitude could devise, to remove the cause, whatever it might be, of this strange conduct; but all efforts were unavailing. Physicians were now sent for, and after maturely considering the cases, it was decided that the children were BEWITCHED! And this was the lighting up of that fire which sheds such a melancholy light over the historic page of that period. The annunciation carried terror to every bosom. A heavier cloud settled upon the brow of the old; the joyous blood of the youthful heart was suddenly chilled; the happy laugh of childhood was subdued, suppressed. Every thing seemed tinged as with a glare from the nether world. The excitement soon began to spread. Several other girls in the neighborhood became affected. Private and public fasts were held. And if ever fervent, agonizing prayers went up to heaven from the hearts and lips of men, it was from the terror-stricken ones of that dark period. Scrupulously did they fast; earnestly did they pray, that the spiritual plague might not be permitted to spread. On the solemn occasion of public exercise, the bewitched themselves were generally present; and not unfrequently their most violent fits came on during the exercises. And they would sometimes go into the most dreadful convulsions. The first person accused by these children, of bewitching them, was an old Indian woman in the family of Mr. Parris, and she actually confessed that she did bewitch them, having derived her supernatural powers from the evil one, with whom she had entered into a most solemn league. This confession, as may well be supposed, added immensely to the excitement. Few, now, could doubt that the arch enemy had commenced his dreadful work in their midst in good earnest.

Increase Mather, in giving an account of a visit he made to Salem Village, on the 19th of March, mentions this Abigail Williams, whom he saw in one of her fits. He says, "she was hurried to and fro in the room," though those present endeavored to restrain her. She stretched out her arms as though she would fly; and insisted that she saw the spectre of an old woman who lived in the neighborhood. She ran to the fire and threw firebrands about the house; and did

other things of a similar nature. That night, Mather says, he lodged at the house of Nathaniel Ingersol, which was in the neighborhood of Mr. Parris's. "Presently after I came into my lodgings," says he, "Capt. Walcot's daughter Mary came to Lieutenant Ingersol's and spake to me; but suddenly after, as she stood by the door, was bitten, so that she cried out, of her wrist; and looking on it with a candle, we saw apparently the marks of teeth, both upper and lower set, on each side of the wrist." He preached in the village the next day, which was the Sabbath, and there were present at the meeting several of the afflicted persons; among them Abigail Williams. And there was also present a woman named Martha Cory, who was the next day examined on the charge of being a witch; and who was finally executed. Continuing his account of their presence in the meeting house, he says, "They had several sore fits in the time of public worship, which did something interrupt me in my first prayer. After psalm was sung, Abigail Williams said to me, 'Now stand up and name your text!' And after it was read she said, 'It is a long text.' . . . In the beginning of the sermon, Mrs. Pope, a woman afflicted, said to me, 'Now there is enough of that.' . . . In sermon time, when Goodwife C. was present in the meeting house, Abigail Williams called out, 'Look where Goodwife C. sits on the beam, suckling her yellow bird betwixt her fingers!'* Ann Putnam, another girl afflicted, said there was a yellow bird sat on my hat as it hung on the pin in the pulpit; but those that were by restrained her from speaking loud about it."

The next day, as above observed, this Martha Cory was examined by the magistrates of Salem. And from the same learned and pious writer, I will extract a few incidents of the examination. . . . "About twelve of the clock they went into the meeting house, which was thronged with spectators. Mr. Noyes began with a very pertinent and pathetical prayer; and Goodwife C. being called to answer to what was alleged against her, she desired to go to prayer, which was much wondered at, in the presence of so many hundred people; the magistrates told her they would not admit it; they came not to hear

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* The meeting houses of those days had few of the comforts of modern structures, and none of their elegancies. The ponderous rafters and beams were open to view, the floors were without pews, and supplied with rude uncomfortable seats, except that here and there a venerable dame or sire occupied a chair. Fires, in the coldest weather, were not dreamed of; and it was considered a just cause of complaint if the minister did not occupy at least two hours in the services—their faith kept them warm. And the worshipers not unfrequently came from distances of six or eight miles.

her pray, but to examine her, in what was alleged against her."* The afflicted ones present "vehemently accused her, in the assembly, of afflicting them, by biting, pinching, strangling, &c. And they did in their fits see her likeness coming to them, and bringing a book to them; she said she had no book; they affirmed that she had a yellow bird, that used to suck betwixt her fingers, and being asked about it, if she had any familiar spirit, that attended her, she said she had no familiarity with any such thing. . . . . The said C. said they were poor distracted children, and no heed to be given to what they said. Mr. Hathorne and Mr. Noyes replied that it was the judgment of all that were present, they were bewitched, and only she the accused person said they were destracted. It was observed several times, that if she did but bite her under lip in time of examination, the persons afflicted were bitten on their arms and wrists, and produced the marks before the magistrates and others. And being watched for that, if she did but pinch her fingers, or grasp one hand hard in another, they were pinched and produced the marks before the magistrates and spectators. After that it was observed that if she did but lean her breast against the seat in the meeting house, (being the bar at which she stood,) they were afflicted. Particularly Mrs. Pope complained of grievous torment in her bowels as if they were torn out. She vehemently accused the said C. as the instrument, and first threw her muff at her; but that flying not home, she got her shoe and hit Goodwife C. on the head with it. After these postures were watched, if the said C. did but stir her feet, they were afflicted in their feet, and stamped fearfully. . . . They accused her of having familiarity with the devil in the time of examination, in the shape of a black man whispering in her ear."

Who can fail to perceive that in this scene at the meeting house, there was something extraordinary? Mrs. Pope and the other afflicted ones were evidently acting from some strong, some overpowering mental impulse. And it is equally evident that the presence of the unfortunate Mrs. Cory excited them to an astonishing degree. Well, then, in this you have the operation of witchcraft—witchcraft, a creature of the mind. And in their dreadful mental excitement, while

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*This was exceedingly cruel. A poor lonely woman dragged into an excited, an almost infuriated assembly, charged with a most diabolical crime, and adjudged beforehand, guilty to the last extremity, begging, while deserted by every earthly friend, the consolation of pouring out her heart's agony to him who is the friend and stay of the disconsolate, and asking of him that measure of grace which she keenly felt would be required to sustain her in the fiery ordeal through which she was about to pass—and being denied, even with a sneer!

Mrs. C. was not in their presence, we can well conceive they might fancy they saw her spectre. But of spectral appearances I shall have something to say hereafter. The power of Mrs. Cory seems to have been fully equal to that of the best mesmeriser of modern days. All these mental operations may be called *imagination*. But they certainly brought about most terrible realities. Many people seem to think that there cannot be any thing real, in extraordinary mental manifestations. Perhaps they would be profitably employed, for a time, in attempting to define imagination, and to stake out bounds for it. But when folks come to tell about the devil's going round with a memorandum book under his arm, to get people to sign off their claims to heaven, matters of the material world, which we can comprehend, are brought in play, and we have a right to denounce them as delusion or something worse. And the sucking yellow bird, marks of teeth, &c. were fancies, of course.

These transactions at the meeting house did not take place before a congregation of infants. The aged, the grave, the pious, the learned, were there. And with sorrow and alarm they felt the deplorable reality. The account itself is from one who filled the honorable station of president of Harvard college.

But let us turn our attention for a moment particularly to the children. Mrs. Cory said they were "poor distracted children;" and no doubt she was right. And so were Mr. Noyes and Mr. Hathorne, when they said they were *bewitched*. Just look over the whole history of their affliction, from the beginning. It is extremely difficult for me to believe, with people much wiser than myself, that they were acting from mere caprice, from wantonness or waggery. It is not easy to reconcile the idea with their youth and the attendant circumstances. It requires very elastic reasoning powers to account for such extraordinary ability for the arts of deception, so suddenly exhibited; and such conduct in hitherto dutiful and circumspect children, before weeping parents, grave magistrates and ministers; and a curious and scrutinizing populace. If they were all the time deceiving, they must have acted their part most excellently well, to have excited no suspicion. In casting about for means to account for such conduct, on the ground of deception, some have fixed upon the supposition that these girls had an antipathy against one or two old women and took these means for venting their malice. That is, they pretended to be bewitched for the purpose of having these old women punished as witches. This would answer some purpose were it not for the unfor-

tunate but stubborn fact that the children did not, in the beginning, charge any one with having bewitched them! They did not suggest such a thing as that they were bewitched, until the physicians had decided the matter for them. This is made certain by the record still open to observation on the church book, in Mr. Parris's own hand writing; and which is quoted at large in the note on page 13; a sentence of which it may be well here to repeat: "It is well known that when these calamities first began, which was in my own family, the affliction was *several weeks* before such hellish operations as witchcraft was *suspected*." It is evident, let me repeat, that these children acted from some violent, uncontrollable mental impulse—an impulse which may have arisen from some slight cause. And when the idea of witchcraft was suggested, it became fixed and moulded into most terrific shapes. We have little space to allow for details. And as the safest way of conveying an idea of the occurrences, we will introduce a passage or two from Mather's Magnalia, a work of great value and evidencing the inexhaustible learning, and patient research of the author—his piety and penetration of mind, as well as his generous share of conceit.

The tormentors tendered unto the afflicted a book requiring them to sign it, or to touch it at least, in token of their consenting to be listed in the service of the devil; which they refusing to do, the spectres under the command of that black man, as they called him, would apply themselves to torture them with prodigious molestations.

The afflicted wretches were horribly distorted and convulsed; they were pinched black and blue; pins would be run every where in their flesh; they would be scalded until they had blisters raised on them; and a thousand other things, before hundreds of witnesses, were done unto them, evidently preternatural; for if it were perternatural to keep a rigid fast for nine, yea, for fifteen days together; or if it were preternatural to have one's hands tied close together with a rope to be plainly seen, and then by unseen hands presently pulled up a great way from the earth, before a crowd of people; such preternatural things were endured by them.

But of all the preternatural things which these people suffered, there were none more unaccountable than those wherein the prestigious demons would every now and then cover the most corporeal things in the world with a fascinating mist of invisibility. As now, a person was cruelly assaulted by a spectre, that she said came at her with a spindle, though nobody else in the room could see either the spectre or the spindle; at last, in her agonies, giving a snatch at the spectre, she pulled the spindle away; and it was no sooner got into her hand, but the other folks then present beheld that it was indeed a real, proper, iron spindle; which when they locked up very safe, it was, nevertheless, by the demons taken away to do farther mischief.

Again, a person was haunted by a most abusive spectre, which came to her, she said, with a sheet about her, though seen to none but herself. After she had undergone a deal of teaze from the annoyance of the spectre, she gave a violent snatch at the sheet that was upon it; wherefrom she tore a corner, which in her hand immediately was beheld by all that were present, a palpable corner of a sheet: and her father, which was of her, catched, that he

might see what his daughter had so strangely seized; but the spectre had like to have wrung his hand off, by endeavoring to wrest it from him; however he still held it; and several times this odd accident was renewed in the family. There wanted not the oaths of good creditable people to these particulars.

Also it is known, that these wicked spectres did proceed so far as to steal several quantities of money from divers people, part of which individual money dropt sometimes out of the air, before sufficient spectators, into the hands of the afflicted, while the spectres were urging them to subscribe their covenant with death. Moreover, poisons to the standersby wholly invisible, were sometimes forced upon the afflicted; which, when they have with much reluctancy swallowed, they have swoln presently, so that the common medicines for poisons have been found necessary to relieve them; yea, sometimes the spectres in the struggles have so dropt the poisons, that the standersby have smelt them and viewed them, and beheld the pillows of the miserable stained with them. Yet more, the miserable have complained bitterly of burning rags run into their forcibly distended mouths; and though nobody could see any such cloths, or indeed any fires in the chambers, yet presently the scalds were seen plainly by every body on the mouths of the complainers, and not only the smell, but the smoke of the burning sensibly filled the chambers.

Once more the miserable exclaimed extremely of branding irons, heating at the fire on the hearth to mark them; now the standersby could see no irons, yet they could see distinctly the print of them in the ashes, and smell them too, as they were carried by the not-seen furies unto the poor creatures for whom they were intended; and those poor creatures were thereupon so stigmatized with them, that they will bear the marks of them to their dying day. Nor are these the tenth part of the prodigies that fell out among the inhabitants of New England.

It was also found that the flesh of the afflicted was often bitten at such a rate, that not only the print of the teeth would be left on their flesh, but the very slaver of spittle too, even such as might be clearly distinguished from other people's. And usually the afflicted went through a terrible deal of seeming difficulties from the tormenting spectres, and must be long waited on, before they could get a breathing space from their torments to give in their testimony.

There were, it is true, some men of talent, piety and learning, who during the darkest hours of the excitement, continued to maintain that the whole was a delusion; continued vehemently to inveigh against the sanguinary proceedings. Col. Saltonstall, one of the judges of the court, early withdrew, and always opposed the proceedings. But this did not prove him wiser than his neighbors. It only proved him more skeptical, less susceptible. If there were great men doubters, there were greater ones believers.

Nor must it be supposed that the trials were mere child's play; or that the condemnations took place without what was deemed sufficient evidence. Authors of that period speak particularly on this point, and assert that some of the most judicious and vehement *opposers*, publicly declared, that had they themselves been on the jury, they could not have acquitted the prisoners! "Flashy people," quaintly observes Mather, "may burlesque these things, but when hundreds of the most sober people, in a country where they have as much mother wit cer-

tainly as the rest of mankind, *know them to be true*, nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of saducism can question them."

"There was one," says he, "whose magical images were found, and who confessing her deeds, (when a jury of doctors returned her compos mentis,) actually showed the whole court by what ceremonies used unto them, she directed her familiar spirits how and where to cruciate the objects of her malice; and the experiment being made over and over again before the whole court, the effect followed exactly in the hurts done to the people at a distance from her."

The seeing of spectres seems easily explained.* It originates in strong mental conceptions. At the time to which our narrative relates, it was firmly believed that people were vexed and tormented by spiritual visitants. The impression was so very strong as to render such visitants frequently visible, so to speak, to the mental eye—a mere result of that firm belief. I will state a little fact in illustration of the idea. A young female relative of mine, was betrothed to a youthful mariner. She was a girl of very susceptible feelings; her attachment was ardent, had been of long continuance, and was fondly reciprocated. During his last voyage, she had a singularly strong impression that he would never return. The presentiment weighed so heavily upon her spirits, as to excite the concern of her friends. One stormy night, while the family were absent, she was sitting alone in the parlor, listening to the howling of the winds and the beating of the rain; and as may well be imagined, not unfrequently entertaining a thought of her far-off lover. She thus sat, in silence, till near midnight. All of a sudden, on looking up, she beheld her affianced, standing beside her, with a countenance deadly pale, and with the water dripping from his clothes. She was for a moment bewildered, though not frightened. She essayed to speak, but he vanished too suddenly. To this day, she insists that it was not a dream, that she was fully awake; but admits that she had been long and anxiously thinking of him. It is evident that the spectre originated in her excited mind. He, however, did meet his death, by drowning, at the precise time of the appearance, as near as could be ascertained, on

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*The lecturer, while attempting to explain the philosophy of spectral appearances, would not be understood to deny that miraculous agency has sometimes been employed to recall the dead. It is certainly a no greater exhibition of power to recall than to create. And that the power has been thus exercised, in past ages, at least, we must not doubt. The story of the Witch of Endor, spoken of in the note on page 8, is to the purpose. But the ghost-seeing media of modern times, it is apprehended, may be explained on natural principles.

the arrival of the ship. And though that was merely a coincidence, nothing could shake her belief that he came to the fond object of his affection, with the tidings of his own departure.

When the mind is thus prepared, very slight things will operate as powerful evidence. Prints of branding irons could easily be seen in ashes, prints of teeth and blisters upon flesh, and all things of a like nature. But it is not so easy to account for iron spindles, ropes, pins or pieces of sheet, being actually retained in possession of those who seized them. We are justified in supposing that some roguery was carried on here. The minds of people were prepared to believe the most absurd things, and to be imposed upon with marvellous facility. Impositions, indeed, were frequently detected and exposed. And this is further evidence that our ancestors were not so perfectly blind as some seem to think. The work to which such frequent reference has been made, has this passage: "In fine, the last courts that sate upon this thorny business, finding that it was impossible to penetrate into the whole meaning of the things that had happened, *and that so many unsearchable cheats were interwoven into the conclusion of a mysterious business*, which perhaps had not crept thereinto at the beginning of it, they cleared the accused as fast as they tried them."

These strong impressions may sometimes seize upon the mind at the suggestion of some most natural appearance, and as instantly be dispelled, at the suggestion of reason. One very dark night, at about twelve o'clock, a friend of mine was walking along a desolate road, through a swampy piece of woods, and all at once observed, gliding close by his side, apparently a person about his own size, clothed in shiny white. Though the object kept pace, and performed the usual motions of a person walking, it was noiseless. Although a little startled at first, his better judgment immediately suggested that it was not a real existence. With his walking stick he struck at it, but only beat the air. He paused, and that likewise paused. Taking two or three steps in a sideling direction, he found himself on the brink of a gully, and at once discovered the cause of the illusion. The heavy clouds were just lifting in the western horizon, and a faint light fell upon the water in the gully—just enough to give it a silvery tinge. On this mirror his dark shadow fell, though the impression on his mind was as if the shadow were of a silvery hue, moving on a dark ground. Such was the spectre; and as real a one probably as any person living has seen. But these impressions may obtain such an ascendancy, under some circumstances, over the judgment of an individual or a community, as

even to make natural phenomena and fact yield to them—be secondary and subservient. Such precisely was the case in the memorable year 1692. The received impression was that legions of emissaries of the evil one had been let loose upon this devoted community, and that in many cases the people "had their eyes so refined" that they could perceive these at times invisible tormentors. And every thing was bent and twisted till it supported that belief. Whatever fact was too inflexible to be perverted, was at once denounced as unscriptural, saducean. Just as one among us would argue: The Bible teaches this or that doctrine. The Bible is true. Hence, if any thing is advanced contrary to this or that doctrine, it cannot be true, however plausible it may seem.

One beautiful spring morning, I was walking in an orchard, with a gentleman from one of the remote Swiss cantons, where a belief in fairy visitations still prevails. He was much less delighted at the prospect of a profusion of fruit, than at the presence of the gay company of fairies. And he became quite angry on my insisting that I could not see the lovely creatures which to him were so perceptible, sporting among the blossoms. He saw them clearly through his mental vision.

It is really amusing to see how the mind, under these impressions, will sometimes grapple with physical impossibilities.

How is it about those devils which visited you the other day? said I to a neighbor.

I don't want to say any thing about them. People don't believe me; and the truth is good for nothing if it is n't believed, he replied.

What did they resemble?

They were as large as gray squirrels; striped with yellow and red; and had white wings

How many were there?

About two dozen.

Where did they come from?

They jumped out of the coffee pot, while my wife and myself were sitting at breakfast.

How much will your coffee pot hold?

About two quarts.

Now, Mr. S., do you not perceive the utter impossibility in the way of the truth of your story? How could two dozens of gray squirrels get into a two quart coffee pot?

That is the very thing that I told my wife, at the time, puzzled me

most. And what was most remarkable, they came out of the nose. But I'm ready to take my oath that it is true. It's of no use to reason against the senses.

The fact was, the man had the delirium tremens. And in reading over the recorded evidence on some of the witch trials, I am strongly inclined to the belief that some of the witnesses had been familiar with strong water bottles.*

Natural phenomena, were always regarded in the light of supernatural signs. The story of the Phantom Ship is familiar to every one.† The nightly howlings of the wild beasts in the woods, were unceremoniously charged upon his satanic majesty. And every department of nature was forced to furnish evidence in support of the one dreadful idea.

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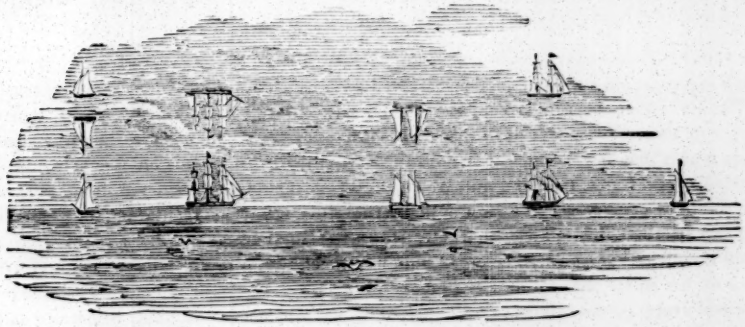
* One of the persons executed at Salem was Susanna Martin, of Amesbury. And it is really sad to see what evidence was received against her. The poor woman had become vexed at one Kembel, on account of his having purchased a puppy of some one else, after having agreed to purchase of her, and declared that if she lived, she would give him puppies enough. The witness thus testifies: "Within a few days after this, Kembel coming out of the woods, there arose a little black cloud in the northwest, and Kembel immediately felt a force upon him, which made him not able to avoid running upon the stumps of trees that were before him, although he had a broad plain cartway before him; but though he had his axe on his shoulder to endanger him in his falls, he could not forbear going out of his way to tumble over them. When he came below the meeting house, there appeared to him a little thing like a puppy of a darkish color, and it shot backwards and forwards between his legs. He had the courage to use all possible endeavors to cut it with his axe, but he could not hit it; the puppy gave a jump from him, and went, as to him it seemed, into the ground," &c. &c.

† The appearance of the Phantom Ship, at New Haven, in 1647, occasioned a great sensation, throughout New England. Probably some vessel was passing up Long Island Sound, and the phantom arose from atmospheric refraction. This kind of mirage is thus accurately illustrated by Alonzo Lewis, in his excellent history of Lynn:



Mr. Lewis remarks: "On a pleasant Sunday afternoon, in the summer of 1843, I saw several vessels sailing off Nahant, reflected in the manner represented above. The atmosphere was dense, yet transparent, and there were several strata of thin vapory clouds lightly suspended over the water, on which the vessels were brightly mirrored. The refracted images were as clearly portrayed as the real vessels beneath; and a drawing can but imperfectly represent the exceeding beauty of the mirage."

It is melancholy, it is horrible, to see how evidence was sometimes distorted to prove the guilt of the accused. In some cases the testimony was such as a jury might convict upon; but in others, it was so palpably absurd, or bore such evident marks of malevolence or waggery, that we may well be astonished that it was for a moment listened to by those claiming to possess common sense.

Another fact must not be lost sight of. Those charged—or cried out against—as the phrase was, not unfrequently confessed themselves guilty. The very first person charged did this. And well might such confessions aid the progress of the whirlwind. How do we account for this? Some tell us that the confessions were wrung from them by threatened torture, or elicited by promises of release or pardon. But it is not true that this was always the case. No less than fifty-five persons, some of them having through life sustained good characters, confessed themselves guilty of this most diabolical crime. The reason is as clear as daylight. They were laboring under the same impressions that weighed upon all the rest of the community. They did not trust at all to their own judgment; but gave credence to the evidence that was adduced against them. Their case may be illustrated by that of the artless countryman, who, after listening to the lawyer who was vehemently pleading against him, rushed before the court with the most inexpressible horror depicted on his countenance, exclaiming in frenzy, "Take me off, take me off to prison; I find I deserve it, though I thought till now, that I was innocent as a child!"*

And we must not neglect to refer to the recantations. Many of the most zealous prosecutors and persecutors, afterwards—when the spell was broken—recanted, and in dust and tears mourned over their er-

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* Confessions are, in courts of justice, received with caution. And, when possible, the state of mind under which the person confessing acts, is accurately ascertained. Men's hopes or fears are sometimes so wrought upon that they may easily be led to declare themselves guilty of crimes which they never committed. And the actual belief of guilt is often engendered and firmly fixed. Yet, frank, free, and unbiased confessions should be considered strong evidence; for it is not to be presumed that a man will sacrifice his safety or reputation, by denouncing himself as a criminal, while he is innocent. It is also sometimes found that a timid, apprehensive, and injudicious person will resort to such means to show himself innocent as prove strong evidence of his guilt. Lord Hale mentions a sad instance. A young woman was heard to cry out, "Good uncle, do not kill me!" The next day, she was not to be found. She was wealthy, and her uncle was naturally suspected of having made way with her. To prove his innocence, he was required to produce her. This he could not do, for she had absconded. He knew a girl, very much resembling his niece, and strange as it may seem, hoped to remove suspicion by producing her. The cheat was detected, and of course taken as all but positive evidence of his guilt. He was executed for the supposed murder. But his niece was afterward found to be living.

rors. But on examination it will be found that they, in their deepest sorrow, assert that they were sincere—that they verily thought they were doing God service. Mr. Parris himself, made a sort of half-way recantation. The jury who sat on the cases at Salem Village, put forth a recantation, in which they most touchingly refer to their acts; most humbly asking forgiveness of all those living, whom they had by their decisions injured, and expressing a hope and confidence that Heaven would forgive them, as they acted, as they fully believed, in the way of duty. Nobody doubts their sincerity. But those same minds might have run into some other extreme, on some other occasion. Mather, however, who was one of the most zealous of the zealots, disposes of the matter easily. He thought it did much to advance the cause of religion. After speaking of various ways in which it promoted the cause of holiness, he continues: "Some scores of other young people, who were strangers to real piety, were now struck with the lively demonstrations of hell evidently set forth before their eyes, when they saw persons cruelly frightened, wounded, and starved, by devils, and scalded by burning brimstone; and yet so preserved in this tortured state, as that, at the end of one month's wretchedness, they were as able still to undergo another. In the whole the devil got just nothing; but God got praises, Christ got subjects, the Holy Spirit got temples, the church got additions, and the souls of men got everlasting benefits." This view was certainly conscience-easing.

But to return, for a moment, to the dreadful scenes of 1692. It would be difficult for us to conceive of the horrors of that period. Every one stood aghast. It was the general belief that our heavenly father had given up this devoted community to the ravages of the arch enemy. The accusations did not rest upon the miserable and decrepit outcasts alone; but some of the worthiest and wisest were charged with the fell crime. The demon entered the domestic circle. Drops of blood stained the hearth stone. The eye balls of fiends glared upon the sleeping infant. The distressed parent was dragged to prison on the accusation of the afflicted child. And the child was led from the play ground to the stern bar of justice, on the fearful accusation of the parent. The whole community was in mourning. It was truly the reign of terror. No one was safe from the presentation of a warrant of arrest. And such evidence was received, and all so distorted to work conviction, that an arrest was almost equivalent to a death warrant. The number of persons hung at Salem, was nineteen. One aged man was pressed to death. Eight or nine were

condemned to death, but not executed. A hundred and fifty were imprisoned, and two hundred others accused. And poor Salem lost about a third part of her population, by removal and otherwise.

My own humble opinion of the matter, has probably been made sufficiently clear. In common speech we say witchcraft was a delusion; but yet there was a reality in the mental action from which the wild proceedings arose. What is the mesmerism of modern days? Is there no reality in the manifestations which many wise ones now admit take place through that agency? Indeed I have heard advocates of this system assert that the power of those deemed witches consisted in mesmeric influence.*

But the dreadful spell was broken. The minds of the people underwent a reaction—took a new course. Then were lamentations heard in the streets, for errors committed. And penitential tears gushed forth. It is a sad subject, but discloses an important phase of human nature. In almost every age there is an eruption from the same

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* Our friends, the advocates of mesmerism, will not allow us to doubt that things of as wonderful a nature as aught that appears in the whole history of witchcraft, may take place any day. How much truth there is in mesmerism, who is able to decide? I apprehend, its phenomena may be accounted for in the same manner that the developments of witchcraft may be explained. The reality consists in strong, overpowering, mental conceptions. I very well remember hearing the pioneer of mesmerism in this country, declare that if one could not be made to believe in the science, he could not be made to feel its effects. There is the whole secret. Just induce one firmly to believe that you have power to put him into that peculiar state, and he straightway passes into it, as the mere result of that firm belief. Just make one firmly believe that you can bewitch him, and he is in your power, for that purpose. These things show the ruling power which the mind has, over the body. It indeed shows the operation of faith. And the bold figurative assertion of scripture, that faith can remove mountains, is fully sustained. The fact is, there are marvellous truths, both in the world of mind, and the world of matter, and the wholesale rejection of the one class or the other, without examination, does not, certainly, evince the highest attainment in wisdom. Matters pertaining to the immaterial world, however, in this utilitarian age, are generally subjected to the roughest treatment. How often do we hear this or that proposition denounced as not being in accordance with the laws of mind. He must be wise indeed who is sufficiently conversant with those laws, to be always correct in such denunciations. It may, in truth be absurd, in his beggarly conception. No created existence has power to comprehend itself. Matter cannot comprehend matter, nor mind, mind. The latter, however, can comprehend the former, for it is superior to it; and conclusive evidence of that superiority is exhibited in this fact itself. And then, as mind is the highest of all created existences, it follows that it can be comprehended only by Deity. We are therefore totally incompetent to set bounds for its powers and manifestations. Then there is the matter of *spiritual intercourse*. They who reject the idea of an intercourse between spirit, even while it exists in the body, and spirit which has no bodily form, reject the plainly revealed word of God. The laws which regulate that intercourse may never be defined; but this is no proof of their non-existence. Why are we commanded to pray? A man who disbelieves in all connection between ourselves and the spiritual world, does not certainly act with the most perfect consistency, to offer up prayer. Indeed, what is argument, or persuasion, but the attempt of one mind to induce sympathetic action in another mind?

crater, though perhaps the hot lava is of different consistency. It is often profitable to trace the progress of these eruptions in the body politic. Sometimes it is slow, almost imperceptible; and sometimes it is like the raging of the prairie fire. Glance, for instance, at the infidelity of France; watch the workings of the sweet poison thrown into the body politic in the first half of the eighteenth century; see how like a subtle disease it fixed upon the vitals; how, by cunning and varied appliances, it ultimately reached every class, circulated in every vein; and how, finally, urged on by calm, inflexible energy like that of a Buffon or a Condillac; by all elements like those of a Voltaire or a Rosseau; by daring, ferocious impiety, like that of a Diderot, it burst forth in such a whirlwind as overwhelmed with fierce destruction, peace on earth, trust and hope in heaven. Then were the lovely banks of the Loire made pestilent by the dissolving remains, and the waters made red and warm by the gushing blood of innocence. Then the ghosts of the betrayed and sacrificed wandered among the smouldering ruins of fallen temples and altars, and wept for desecrated household fanes. And this was just one century *after* the distractions in New England. But people do not think witchcraft had any thing to do with thus tearing out the very bowels of France; yet, was there not something quite as dreadful and quite as unaccountable?

The days of witchcraft, we trust, have passed. Our progress in refinement, in the arts of life, in science, has opened new regions into which the mind may soar for exercise and profit. But yet, if that belief is the legitimate offspring of a principle of our nature, the root from which it sprang remains. And what can assure us that in some age to come it may not again spread aloft its baleful shadow? There is, however, no danger of a return of the murky cloud upon New England, while the views of the people remain as they are. But are there no views now prevalent as strange, and as much to be dreaded, in their full development, as those of 1692?

A Witch of the 15th Century.—*Spencer.*

There in a gloomy hollow glen she found
A little cottage built of sticks and weedes,
In homely wise, and wald with sods around
In which a witch did dwell, in loathly weedes;
And wilful want, all careless of her needes;
So choosing solitarie to abide
Far from all neighbors, that her devilish deedes
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off unknown whomever she envide.

A Witch of the 19th Century.—*Whittier.*

Our witches are no longer old,
And wrinkled beldames, satan-sold;
But young, and gay, and laughing creatures,
With the heart's sunshine on their features—
Their sorcery—the light which dances
When the raised lid unveils its glances;
And the low breathed and gentle tone
Faintly responding unto ours,
Soft, dream-like as a fairy's moan,
Above its nightly closing flowers.

PART III.

Other Species of Witchcraft. Charms. Amulets, &c.

LET us entertain whatever views we may, in regard to spectral appearances and many other matters pertaining to our subject, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that sometimes those said to have been bewitched, were found to suffer from the effects of disease, and to pine away and die in accordance with the maledictions of those who it was alleged bewitched them. The *effects* here, were *real*, whatever may have been the *cause*. We may call the cause imagination—and perhaps that is a proper term—but the effects were very far from being imaginary. The mind has an effect upon the body, such as we are not accustomed duly to recognise; and an impression made upon the mental portion of our nature, may seriously affect the physical organization. Disease and death frequently follow from the operation of the mind. We should remember that the mind is *master* of the body. How clearly is this shown in the awful crime of suicide. Here, the mind wills the destruction of the body, and severe as the agony is, that body cannot resist. Skillful and cunning mental appliances often exhibit results, astonishing to the unbelieving or unreflecting.

As a familiar example, I would refer to the story of the farmer of Warwickshire, told by Darwin, and so touchingly versified by Wordsworth, under the title of Goody Blake and Harry Gill. And the story, by the way is well authenticated. During a winter season, this unfeeling young man discovered that sticks had been purloined from his hedges. So one cold night, he concealed himself near where the trespass had been committed, and remained watching till near midnight, when an old woman made her appearance and began to collect a bundle of sticks. He remained undiscovered till she had proceeded so far as to enable him to convict her of theft, and then sprang upon her:

"And fiercely by the arm he took her,
And by the arm he held her fast,
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,
And cried, 'I've caught you then at last!'

Then Goody, who had nothing said,
Her bundle from her lap let fall;
And kneeling on the sticks, she pray'd,
To God that is the judge of all.

She pray'd, her wither'd hand uprearing,
While Harry held her by the arm—
'God! who art never out of hearing,
O may he never more be warm!'

The cold, cold moon above her head,
Thus on her knees did Goody pray;
Young Harry heard what she had said,
And icy cold, he turned away."

He was immediately seized with such chills as set his teeth to chattering. The next day, he was so very cold that he was obliged to put on additional garments; but all his efforts could not restore him to warmth. He was finally obliged to take to his bed, which he kept for twenty years, shivering beneath an enormous quantity of blankets, when death released him from his suffering. Here, it is evident, the solemnity and fervor of the old woman's prayer, offered under such impressive circumstances, instantly awakened, in a perhaps naturally apprehensive mind, an overwhelming conviction that it would be answered. And it was literally answered through the operation of his own mind.

That the mind has great effect in removing or producing disease cannot be doubted. Miller, a German physician of some note, observes: "The influence of ideas upon the body, gives rise to a variety of phenomena which border on the marvellous. It may be stated as a general fact, that any state of the body, which is conceived to be approaching, and which is expected with perfect confidence and certainty of its occurrence, will be very prone to ensue, as the mere result of that idea, if it do not lie without the bounds of possibility."

During the prevalence of the cholera in France, in 1832, a number of experiments were tried by the physicians to discover if possible the extent of this influence of the mind upon the body in relation to diseases. This was one of the experiments: A healthy criminal in a prison was removed from one cell into another; and though no one having the cholera, had ever been in the prison, a physician remarked in the hearing of the criminal that he hoped the poor fellow would not die of the cholera, as they had just removed from the cell into which

they were placing him, the corpse of a man who had died of that terrible disease. The next day, the man was found dead, and what was most remarkable, it was evident that he had died of the cholera. This was the first case that had appeared in the prison.

I very well remember that when quite a lad, with two or three school fellows I went to an elderly lady who had a high reputation for curing warts, by charms. She received us kindly, and simply asked each of us how many warts we had. We told her. She then assured us that in three weeks they would all be gone. And her assurance was verified. The implicit faith we had in her power undoubtedly put in action that portion of the physical machinery which removed, by absorption, the excrescencies.

Few, probably, will doubt these things. And the position taken, is strongly fortified by the following extract from one of Dr. Warren's medical lectures of 1832. "Sometime since," observed that eminent practitioner, "a female friend presented herself to me, with a tumor or swelling of the submaxillary gland of the neck, which had become what is called a wen. It was about the size of an egg, had lasted two years, and was so very hard, that I considered any attempt to dissipate it by medicine to be vain, and advised its removal by operation. To this the patient could not bring her mind; therefore, to satisfy her wish, I directed some applications of considerable activity to be made to the part, and these she pursued for a number of weeks, without any change. After this she called on me, and with some hesitation begged to know whether an application recommended to her, would in my opinion be safe. This consisted in applying the hand of a dead man three times to the diseased part. One of her neighbors now lay dead, and she had an opportunity of trying the experiment, if I thought it not dangerous. At first I was disposed to divert her from it; but recollecting the power of the imagination, I gravely assured her she might make the trial without apprehension of serious consequences. Awhile after, she presented herself once more, and with a smiling countenance informed me that she had used this remedy, and on examining for the tumor, I found it had disappeared."

There is no doubt that pains, particularly those of a nervous character, are often removed by these to some people singular appliances. All requisite to charm away a pain in many cases is to fully convince the one on whom you would operate that you have power to relieve him. This *faith* is marvellous in its results. It is the *miraculous* power claimed by some bodies of christians. I was not long ago con-

versing with an Elder who vehemently and sincerely maintained that he could establish the authenticity of his doctrines by miraculous exhibitions. I asked him what he could do. He said he could heal diseases. Well, said I, please to cure that man's head. I can, if he has faith. But can you not do it without his having faith in your power? Certainly not, he replied—and quoted some scripture which did not seem applicable. Now this showed that the power was not miraculous. A miracle, properly, is a contravention of some law of nature; and hence *faith* is not a prerequisite. It is, for instance, a miracle to change water into wine, for the water cannot exercise faith. If this distinction were kept in mind, great errors would be avoided by many very good christian people.

This power of the mind, or imagination, if people think proper so to call it, in curing diseases or aggravating them, is so great that all medical men know that where a patient firmly believes he must die, there is little hope of saving him. And on the other hand, the progress of restoration to health is greatly accelerated by faith in the means employed.

The eminent Mr. Boyle says that at one time he was very subject to the nose bleed, and after using several remedies, he found the moss of a dead man's skull the most effectual. And he speaks of amulets as often efficacious—the effluvia pervading the pores of the body—supposing "an agreement between the pores of the skin, and the figure of the corpuscles." *

Every body knows, however, that intelligent physicians have a thousand difficulties to contend with arising from prejudice and downright superstition. And they are often obliged to conceal their better knowledge and fall in with the whims of people. Formerly, the belief extensively prevailed that a remedy should partake of the *color* of the

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* The following extract from a scarce work of Reginald Scot—the "Discoverie of Witchcraft"—will give sufficient information on the use of amulets: "An *Agat* (they saie) hath vertue against the biting of scorpions or serpents. It is written (but I will not stand to it) that it maketh a man eloquent, and procureth the favor of princes; yea that the fume thereof doath turn awaie tempests! *Chelidonius* is a stone taker out of a swallowe, which cureth melancholie! *Amethysus* maketh a droonken man sober, and refresheth the wit! The *Corall* preserveth such as beare it, from fascination or bewitching, and in this respect they are hanged about the children's neckes! *A Topase* healeth the lunaticke person of his passion of lunacie! *Chalcedonius* maketh the bearer luckie in law, quickeneth the power of the bodie, and is also of force against the illusion of the divell, and phantasticall cogitations! *Corneolous* mitigateth the heate of the mind, and qualifieth malice! *Iris* maketh rainbows to appeare!" And the astute author adds that according to "the aboundance of humane superstitions and follies" some ascribe to these stones other or greater powers than they possess!

disease. A relic of that belief comes to us in the use of saffron for the meazles. The color of the remedy corresponds with the color of the disease. But saffron tea is no better for the meazles than catnip tea; yet a physician would be considered a half heretic, if he prescribed the latter.

In reflecting upon these subjects we should be careful to discriminate between those occurrences which are to be ascribed, to the operation of the mind upon the body, and those which cannot be affected by mental operations. Gross superstitions are exhibited in the latter class. Even Hippocrates urged particular studies on his son, because "the rising and setting of the stars have a great effect upon distempers." The plague of London, many supposed, arose from causes similar to the above. In a pamphlet, by W. Kemp, A. M., dedicated to Charles II. is this passage: "One cause of breeding the pestilence is that corruption of the air, which is occasioned by the influence of the stars, by the aspects, conjunctions, and oppositions of the planets, by the eclipses of the sun and moon, and by the consequences of comets." It is very important for a just apprehension of what I would urge, to make the distinction in classes of occurrences here referred to.

I trust that what has been said will not be misunderstood. It would be doing great injustice to charge me with intimating that such occurrences as some that have been instanced are common. I only undertake to say that such effects follow in the degree of faith which can be brought into action; if they be not without the bounds of possibility. Some people have no more faith than stones—and so you may as well try to operate on stones. Others are so susceptible that they will go into the mesmeric sleep at the command of another. One of the most interesting and profitable chapters in the history of these times, is that relating to quack medicines. It would be heresy to attempt to convince the world that they do not perform wonders. But, I apprehend the curative effects in most instances follow rather from the faith of the patient than from any inherent properties of the nostrums. But then, if the effects really follow, the only difference seems to be that two cents would purchase some known and simple medicine to effect what twenty-five cents' worth of the patent concoctions would.

PART IV.

Astrology. Demonology. Fortune Telling. Moll Pitcher. Conclusion.

ASTROLOGY, Demonology, Magic, Sorcery, and the many other systems of a hidden, mysterious nature, have held more or less sway in all times. Ages ago they were reduced to form, and ranked as sciences. Poetry is full of their imagery. And many an intricate pass in history has been illumined by the glow which they have shed.

The dreamy light of the fascinating, I had almost said sublime, system of *Astrology*, has led to some of the lofty discoveries in astronomy. That system is still prevalent in oriental countries. Through its agency, it is believed, the fates of men may be read in the starry volume which is nightly opened above. The earliest accounts we have of the human race, show that they led a pastoral life. And as they watched their flocks upon the star lit plains, do we wonder that they should have traced out images of strength, beauty, or mystery, among the marshaled hosts above, or should have fancied the fates of men there recorded in glittering lines. Orion, the most magnificent of all the celestial constellations upon which the eye of man is permitted to gaze, and which at the moment I am speaking, is pursuing its stately march across the clear blue vault, may trace its very name to the old mythology.

Demonology has in some ages formed an important part of the very religion of men. In the Æneid we have this bold description of one under the influence of a demon:

"Invoke the skies,
I feel the God, the rushing God, she cries;
While yet she spoke, enlarged her features grew;
Her color changed, her locks disheveled flew;
The heavenly tumult reigns in every part,
Pants in her breast, and swells her rising heart;
Still swelling to the sight the priestess glow'd,
And heaved impatient of the incumbent God."

But the progress of true science and purified religion has loosened the hold of most forms of superstition. Yet, even now, and among

us, we may perceive lingering traces of these mysteries. How many sober business men constantly carry *lucky bones* or *pocket pieces*. How many regard *lucky* and *unlucky days*. How many regard the infinite variety of *signs*. In the ballad of Cumnor Hall are touchingly exhibited several superstitions of the latter class, which may well apply forcibly to many cases of our day. Earl Dudley, it will be remembered, was suspected of having caused the death of his unfortunate countess, in the vain hope of obtaining the hand of his sovereign. Elizabeth, however, proposed him to Mary of Scots; but she indignantly rejected him.

"The death-bell thrice was heard to ring,
An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flapped his wing
Around the towers of Cumnor Hall.

The mastiff howled at village door,
The oaks were shattered on the green;
Wo was that hour—for never more
The hapless countess e'er was seen.

And in that manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball;
For ever since that dreary hour
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall."

The system of *fortune telling* will probably prevail in ages to come. The restless spirit of man will ever seek to look beyond the veil. And though his better judgment whispers that the hand which essays to draw aside the curtain is as weak as his own, his trembling hopes and fears beget a confidence. Says Mackenzie, "Of many who say they do not believe in fortune telling, I have known few on whom it had not a very sensible effect." How many a sturdy mariner goes stealthily to consult the crone, before embarking upon the treacherous billows. How many a blooming maiden pursues the moonlit path to the habitation of the fortune teller, tremblingly to inquire if the fates have ordained that the concealed, but consuming love of her own gentle heart is to find a response in that heart where alone repose can be found.

The traveler, as he pursues his way eastward from the metropolis of Massachusetts, may observe an abrupt, rocky elevation, upon the left, a furlong or two, from the second railroad depot in Lynn. This elevation is called High Rock, and the view from it is perhaps as expansive, varied and magnificent, as from any spot in all New England. The broad expanse of the Bay, boundless to the vision, save that under the clearest sky the dim outline of Cape Cod is percepti-

by the many lovely islands lying about the entrance to the spacious harbor of Boston, with the countless vessels moving among them; the bold cliffs of Nahant, and the rocky headlands against which the surly waves constantly dash, and then foam and roll away in spent fury upon the worn pebbles and glittering sands of the coves and beaches; the spires and indistinct architectural piles of the city, with the blue hills of Norfolk beyond; the wide-spread and populous town of Lynn, occupying the broad plain which stretches from the bold rampart of woody hills upon the north; the detached habitations, scattered upon the romantic declivities, beside the ponds and among the craggy niches along the wild shores; the spires of distant towns lifting themselves above the hills; the river, the meadows, the woods;—these, and a thousand minute objects, make up a picture of rare grandeur and beauty.

Upon the declivity of this elevation, once stood a lonely cottage, which, for more than half a century, was the home of the renowned Moll Pitcher. There, in that then sequestered spot, it may literally be said, she was visited by those of every kindred and nation. And there, on the ninth of April, 1813, at the age of seventy-five, she passed within that veil which she had so often professed to lift for others to catch glimpses of their future destinies. That she was an extraordinary woman, cannot be doubted. Taking the position, which we are assured she herself always assumed, that she possessed no other means for direct intercourse with the unseen world, than those who sought her aid, it must be acknowledged that she had marvelous quickness of perception—ability to compare, combine, and analyze, with wondrous rapidity. And had her mental efforts been directed to loftier pursuits, we can hardly doubt that she might have been a bright star to shed lustre upon the path of men. Few could read the human heart with such precision; and few could with such unerring certainty discover a true index to the affections, the hopes, the fears, of others, in a trembling word, a transient glance. Her influence was felt throughout the civilized world; and fortunes and honors were secured or lost through her predictions. Her maiden name was Mary Diamond. In early life, she experienced severities of fortune; and it is said pursued her profession for a livelihood. Mr. Lewis, in speaking of her personal appearance, says: "She was of the medium height and size for a woman, with a good form and agreeable manners. Her head, phrenologically considered, was somewhat capacious; her forehead broad and full, her hair dark brown, her

nose inclining to long, and her face pale and thin. There was nothing gross or sensual in her appearance—her countenance was [redacted] intellectual; and she had that contour of face and expression, which, without being positively beautiful, is, nevertheless, decidedly interesting—a thoughtful, pensive, and, sometimes downcast look, almost approaching to melancholy—an eye, when it looked at you, of calm and keen penetration—and an expression of intelligent discernment, half mingled with a glance of shrewdness." She seems to have possessed a benevolent heart, and often to have sacrificed her own comfort for that of others. The intelligent writer just referred to, says she has been known to rise before the sun, walk two miles to a mill, purchase meal, and carry it to a poor widow, who would otherwise have had no breakfast for her children. She lived in "homely wise." But her rude cottage was sometimes visited by the nobles of earth, for her fame was as wide as the world. And there, too, came the fairest daughters of the land, the delving student, the anxious business man, the sighing youth. Her predictions seem to have been dispensed with much assurance, and yet with an air of honesty and sincerity. Her name will be known to future generations, in the most distant lands. Even now, we are told, it is chanted in the wild ballads of the old world, and invoked by the starveling gipsey, as he draws around the evening group of villagers. It cannot be denied that her predictions were verified oftentimes with almost startling exactness, and acute reasoners have been most painfully exercised in attempting to account for her extraordinary success on any known principles.

And now, in bidding adieu to those who have kindly listened to my imperfect remarks, I may be allowed the simple observation that *superstition* is a term broad and varied in its popular meaning and application. Often when it has reigned in its legitimate character, its sceptre has thrown a dark and fearful shadow upon the path of men. But sometimes its operations have been misapprehended, and men have referred to it occurrences belonging rather to the departments of true science. Let us remember this; for there are mysteries in the loftest regions of truth.

Note.—While speaking [page 25] of the recantations of some of those who had been zealous in bringing to punishment the supposed witches, in 1692, mention of Judge Sewall was accidentally omitted. After the dreadful scenes had closed, he was so deeply affected in view of the part he had taken, that he annually set apart one day for humiliation and prayer, in private. And on the general fast, he arose before the whole congregation at the Old South Church in Boston, and remained in penitential attitude, while a paper of his was read from the pulpit, expressive of his sorrow. But Chief Justice Stoughton looked back with very different feelings. So far from expressing any regrets, he was displeased at hearing others lament the harsh proceedings. We have no reason to doubt that they were both sincere.

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